

# USS Pinckney Operation Challenges Venezuela's Maritime Claim



Seaman Kristine San Esteban looks through binoculars on the flight deck of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Pinckney. Pinckney is deployed to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility to support Joint Interagency Task Force South's mission. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Erick A. Parsons

CARIBBEAN SEA – The U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Pinckney challenged Venezuela's excessive maritime claim in international waters during a successful freedom of navigation operation on July 15 in the Caribbean Sea, U.S. Southern Command public affairs said in a release.

The Navy previously contested Venezuela's excessive claim on June 23, when the USS Nitze completed a similar operation in international waters outside of Venezuela's 12 nautical-mile territorial sea.

The Maduro regime claims excessive controls over those international waters, which extend 3 miles beyond the 12-mile territorial sea, a claim that is inconsistent with international law.

The Navy conducts freedom of navigation operations worldwide to demonstrate the U.S. commitment to uphold the rights, freedoms, access and lawful uses of international waters and airspace guaranteed to all nations. Freedom of navigation operations help preserve the navigation and access rights guaranteed to all nations.

Global access to international waters protects U.S. national

interests, promotes a just international order, and ensures the Navy can accomplish key missions, including humanitarian assistance deployments, disaster relief operations, support to international counter-narcotics efforts, and multinational exercises that strengthen regional partnerships.

USS Pinckney, as well as other Navy and U.S. Coast Guard ships, are operating in the Caribbean as part of the president's enhanced counter narcotics operation.

"We will exercise our lawful right to freely navigate international waters without acquiescing to unlawful claims," said Navy Adm. Craig Faller, commander of U.S. Southern Command. "The guaranteed right of nations to access, transit and navigate international waters is not subject to impositions or restrictions that blatantly violate international law."